IN THE CLAIMS

Please replace the currently pending claims with the following amended claims. In accordance with the newly instituted revised amendment format, new material to be added to the claims is shown as underlined, while material to be deleted is shown as ~~struck through~~.

1. (Currently amended) A method for detecting the presence or amount of HCV nucleic acids in a test sample, comprising:

(a) reverse transcribing and amplifying HCV nucleic acid if present in said sample using a pair of oligonucleotide primers having the sequences set forth in SEQ ID NO:1 and SEQ ID NO:2;

(b) hybridizing said amplified HCV nucleic acids with an oligonucleotide probe ~~having~~ **consisting of** the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:3 in the presence of an enzyme that cleaves said probe when said probe hybridizes to said HCV nucleic acids, wherein said probe is conjugated to a detectable label that generates a detectable signal upon said cleavage; and

(c) detecting a signal from said detectable label, wherein said signal indicates the presence or amount of HCV nucleic acids in said test sample.

2-7. (Cancelled)

8. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein said probe is conjugated to 2'-chloro-7'-phenyl-1,4-dichloro-6-carboxyfluorescein (VIC) and 6-carboxytetramethylrhodamine (TAMRA).

9. (Currently amended) The method of claim ~~8~~ 1, ~~wherein~~ **further comprising introducing** lambda phage-HCV nucleic acid hybrids ~~are introduced~~ into said test sample, reverse ~~transcribed and amplified~~ **transcribing and amplifying** using the pair of oligonucleotide primers of amplifying step (a) to produce lambda phage-HCV hybrid amplicons.

10. (Currently amended) The method of claim 9, wherein said lambda phage-HCV ~~hybrids~~ **hybrid amplicons** are hybridized to a control oligonucleotide probe having the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO: 6, wherein the control oligonucleotide probe is conjugated to 6-carboxyfluorescein (FAM) and 6-carboxytetramethylrhodamine (TAMRA).

11. (Currently amended) The method of claim ~~8~~ **1**, wherein said test sample is selected from the group consisting of serum, blood, plasma, cerebral spinal fluid, synovial fluid, and urine.

12. (Currently amended) The method of claim ~~8~~ **1**, wherein nucleic acids are purified from said sample prior to said reverse transcription and amplification step (a).

13. (Currently amended) The method of claim ~~12~~ **8**, wherein lambda phage-HCV ribonucleic acid hybrids are introduced into said test sample prior to isolating nucleic acids from said sample.

14. (New) The method of claim 9, wherein said lambda phage-HCV nucleic acid hybrids have the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO: 5.

15. (New) The method of claim 1, further comprising introducing T7 RNA polymerase promoter-lambda phage-HCV nucleic acid hybrids into said test sample, reverse transcribing and amplifying using the pair of oligonucleotide primers of amplifying step (a) to produce T7 RNA polymerase promoter-lambda phage-HCV hybrid amplicons.

16. (New) The method of claim 15, wherein said T7 RNA polymerase promoter-lambda phage-HCV nucleic acid hybrids have the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO: 4.

17. (New) The method of claim 15, wherein said T7 RNA polymerase promoter-lambda phage-HCV hybrids are hybridized to a control oligonucleotide probe having the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO: 6, wherein the control oligonucleotide probe is conjugated to 6-carboxyfluorescein (FAM) and 6-carboxytetramethylrhodamine (TAMRA).

18. (New) A method for detecting the presence or amount of HCV nucleic acids in a test sample, comprising:

(a) introducing lambda phage-HCV nucleic acid hybrids into said test sample;

(b) reverse transcribing and amplifying:

i) HCV nucleic acid if present in said sample and using a pair of oligonucleotide primers having the sequences set forth in SEQ ID NO: 1 and SEQ ID NO: 2, to generate HCV amplicons; and

ii) lambda phage-HCV hybrid nucleic acid using a pair of oligonucleotide primers having the sequences set forth in SEQ ID NO: 1 and SEQ ID NO: 2, to generate a lambda phage-HCV hybrid amplicons ;

(c) hybridizing said HCV amplicons with an oligonucleotide probe consisting of the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:3 in the presence of an enzyme that cleaves said probe when said probe hybridizes to said HCV nucleic acids, wherein said probe is conjugated to a first detectable label that generates a detectable signal upon said cleavage;

(d) hybridizing said lambda phage-HCV hybrid amplicons to a control oligonucleotide probe having the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO: 6, in the presence of an enzyme that cleaves said control oligonucleotide probe when said probe hybridizes to said HCV nucleic acids, wherein said probe is conjugated to a second detectable label that generates a detectable signal upon said cleavage; and

(e) detecting a signal from said first and second detectable labels, wherein said signal from said first detectable label indicates the presence or amount of HCV nucleic acids in said test sample.

19. (New) The method of claim 18, wherein said detectable label is 6-carboxyfluorescein (FAM) and 6-carboxytetramethylrhodamine (TAMRA).

20. (New) The method of claim 18, wherein said lambda phage-HCV nucleic acid hybrids consist of the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO: 5.

21. (New) The method of claim 18, wherein said lambda phage-HCV nucleic acid hybrids further comprises a T7 RNA polymerase promoter nucleic acid sequence.

22. (New) The method of claim 21, wherein said T7 RNA polymerase promoter-lambda phage-HCV nucleic acid hybrids consist of the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO: 4.